

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00224 081636Z

44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05

DHA-02 ORM-02 CCO-00 FEAE-00 OES-03 TRSE-00 EB-07

FAA-00 DOTE-00 /097 W

----- 019616

O R 081455Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8027

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00224 081636Z

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 224

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: NO END IN SIGHT FOR TEL ZAATAR BATTLE

REF BEIRUT 178 (1422Z)

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ABORTED "UNOFFICIAL" MEETING OF HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE, FIGHTING AROUND TEL ZAATAR REFUGEE CAMP FLARED UP DURING NIGHT JAN 7-8. BATTLE CONTINUES AS OF 1300 HOURS JAN 8. INTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS ARE IN PROGRESS TO END THE FIGHTING, BUT HARDENING POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES PROVIDE LITTLE HOPE OF EARLY SETTLEMENT. THERE IS FEAR THAT BATTLE MAY SPREAD TO OTHER PARTS OF BEIRUT, BUT PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP SEEMS DETERMINED TO LIMIT IT TO TEL ZAATAR ZONE. SYRIAN PREMIER KHADDAM'S REMARK QUOTED IN KUWAIT NEWSPAPER TO EFFECT THAT SYRIA WOULD COUNTER PARTICIPATION BY ANNEXING LEBANON HAS ATTRACTED MUCH ATTENTION HERE. END SUMMARY.

2. AN "UNOFFICIAL" MEETING OF THE HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE EVENING JAN 7 HAVING PROVED FRUITLESS, THE MOMENTUM OF FIGHTING PICKED UP CONSIDERABLY OVERNIGHT. ALL THE EASTERN SUBURBS AND THE CITY PROPER IN A LINE RUNNING ALONG WESTERN ASHRAFIYEH FROM RAS NABAA THROUGH THE COMMERCIAL CENTER WERE UNDER FIRE. THE MAIN BATTLE GROUND WAS THE HORCH TABET SECTION OF SIN EL FIL ADJOINING THE TEL ZAATAR-JISR EL PACHA CAMPS. AN ESTIMATED 1,200 PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ALLIES APPARENTLY FOUGHT THEIR WAY INTO SIN EL FIL IN AN ATTEMPT TO REOPEN A ROUTE TO THE CAMPS. THE CLASHES EXTENDED UP TO THE USIS PRINTING PLANT. LEBANESE ARMY AND SECURITY FORCES SUFFERED CASUALTIES DURING THE BATTLE, BUT THEIR ROLE IN THE FIGHTING IS UNCLEAR. THERE ARE CONFLICTING REPORTS AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THE PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN BACK. BOTH SIDES CLAIM VICTORY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00224 081636Z

3. AS OF 1300 HOURS JAN 7, THE FIGHTING CONTINUES WITH THE RADIO WARNING THAT ALL STREETS IN BEIRUT AND MOST SUBURBS DANGEROUS. FLYING ROADBLOCKS ARE POPPING UP AGAIN.

4. OTHER FLARE-UPS OCCURRED IN TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA, BUT AT A LOW LEVEL. ZAHLE HAS BEEN UNAFFECTED. IN THE SOUTH, SOME PALESTINIANS REPORTEDLY ATTACKED POLICE STATIONS IN MIEH MIEH NEAR SIDON AND AYAISHIEH NEAR JAZZINE AND LOOTED

THEM.

5. DESPITE THE ABORTED "UNOFFICIAL" EFFORTS OF THE HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE, INTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS CONTINUE TO TRY TO END THE TEL ZAATAR BATTLE. MINISTER GHASSAN TUEINI PUT FORWARD A PLAN JAN 7 FOR (A) AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE, (B) WITHDRAWAL OF ALL THE FIGHTERS FROM POSITIONS TAKEN, (C) RETURN OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILIES RECENTLY EVACUATED FROM THEIR HOMES IN THAT AREA, AND (D) OPENING OF ALL ROADS TO SUPPLIES. THIS PROGRAM REMAINS THE CLOSEST THING TO A SOLUTION, BUT IT HAS NOT YET PROVED VIABLE BASIS FOR ARRANGING CEASEFIRE. CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE STATED THEY ARE NOT OPPOSED TO PROVISIONING OF TEL ZAATAR CAMP AND WOULD ACT TO ASSURE IT THEMSELVES--I.E., BY CONVOYS UNDER CHRISTIAN CONTROL. CHRISTIAN OPINION SEEMS ADAMANT THAT SECURITY OF ROAD TO MOUNT LEBANON TOWNS OF BEIT MERI AND BROUMMANA, WHICH IS PERIODICALLY THREATENED FROM TEL ZAATAR, MUST BE GUARANTEED BEFORE SIEGE IS ENDED UNCONDITIONALLY. PALESTINIANS ARE DEMANDING TOTAL LIFTING OF SIEGE, AND MOST MILITANT AMONG THEM BELIEVE THEY CAN BREAK SIEGE THROUGH THEIR OWN MILITARY EFFORTS. HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE IS SUPPOSED TO MEET TODAY, BUT AS OF LAST REPORT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONVENE IN ATMOSPHERE WHICH SO FAR SHOWS LITTLE SOFTENING OF ATTITUDE IN EITHER CAMP.

6. NEVERTHELESS, FACT THAT THE PALESTINIANS HAVE CONCENTRATED THEIR EFFORTS ON THE IMMEDIATE GOAL OF LIFTING THE TEL ZAATAR SIEGE INDICATES THEIR APPARENT DESIRE TO PUT A DAMPER ON THE FIGHTING UNTIL AFTER THE UNSC DEBATE. IT IS WELL WITHIN THEIR CAPABILITIES TO SPREAD THE FIGHTING IF THEY CHOOSE, AND FOR THE MOMENT IT IS A HOPEFUL SIGN THAT THEY HAVE NOT. LOGICALLY, THE PALESTINIANS WOULD BE HELPED BY DRAWING SOME OF THE PHALANGISTS AWAY FROM TEL ZAATAR AND STRETCHING THEIR LINES.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 00224 081636Z

AN ATTACK IN THE HOTEL DISTRICT WOULD FIT THEIR NEEDS. THIS IDEA HAS OBVIOUSLY OCCURRED TO OTHERS, AND WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT VARIOUS NASSERIT GROUPS MAY HOLD A MEETING JAN 8 UNDER SPONSORSHIP OF IBRAHIM QULAYLAT AT WHICH THEY WILL DECIDE WHETHER TO REOCCUPY THE HOTELS. SINCE THE NASSERITES ARE MILITARILY JUNIMPARTNERS OF THE PALESTINIANS THE LATTER WILL PROBABLY HAVE MUCH TO SAY IN ANY SUCH DECISION.

7. ON POLITICAL SCENE, CONSIDERABLE INTEREST HAS BEEN STIRRED BY STATEMENT OF SYRIAN PRIME MIN KHADDAM QUOTED IN KUWAIT NEWSPAPER "AL-RAI AL-AAM" TO EFFECT THAT SYRIA WOULD ANNEX ALL OF LEBANON IF PARTITION WERE ACTUALLY UNDERTAKEN. (SEE KUWAIT 0122). KATAEB LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL WARNED PUBLICLY THAT "IF LEBANON IS INVADED BY THE

SYRIANS AND THE ISRAELIS, WE WILL DEFEND THE COUNTRY TO THE LAST MAN". CAMILLE CHAMOUN SUGGESTED THAT KHADDAM SHOULD THINK OF RECOVERING GOLAN BEFORE DREAMING OF ANNEXING LEBANON. PRIVATELY, SOME CHRISTIAN CONTACTS OF EMBASSY HAVE TRIED TO PLAY DOWN SIGNIFICANCE OF KHADDAM'S REPORTED COMMENT, CLAIMING IT DOES NOT REFLECT ATTITUDE OF SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THIS VIEW MAY REFLECT ATTACHMENT AMONG CHRISTIANS TO PARTITION IDEA, AS PRESSURE TACTIC IF NOT AS CONCRETE PLAN. KHADDAM'S STATEMENT IS AN UNWELCOME THREAT TO VIABILITY OF THIS FAVORITE SCHEME OF CHRISTIAN RIGHT-WINGERS, AND IT MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED AS SYRIAN GOVT SIGNAL TO THIS EFFECT.

8. AS BEIRUT'S FUEL OIL SHORTAGE IS BECOMING MORE ACUTE, PETROLEUM MINISTER TUEINI IS CONSIDERING DECREE TO REQUIRE DELIVERY TANK TRUCKS. PURPOSE IS TO OVERCOME OWNERS RELUCTANCE TO RISK INVESTMENT WHICH INSURANCE WILL NOT COVER. MILITARY DRIVERS MAY ALSO BE PROVIDED IF CIVILIANS REFUSE TO WORK. ALTHOUGH PANAM BEGAN ITS WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY SERVICE THROUGH BEIRUT THIS WEEK, PANAM REGIONAL MANAGER SAID DETERIORATION OF SECURITY CALLS INTO QUESTION CONTINUATION. AN AFP REPORT OUTLINING NEW JORDANIAN GOVT STEPS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSFER OF FIRMS FROM BEIRUT TO AMMAN ESTIMATES NUMBER OF LEBANESE IN JORDAN AT 50,000.
GODLEY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ANNEXATION, CIVIL DISORDERS, REFUGEE CAMPS, POLITICAL SITUATION, PARTITION, PROGRESS REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT00224
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760006-1182
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760177/aaaacqlw.tel
Line Count: 193
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BEIRUT 178
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <05 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NO END IN SIGHT FOR TEL ZAATAR BATTLE
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006